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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

27 April 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence
FROM : William W. Wells
Deputy Director for Operations
SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Combat Actions
of Troops Without the Employment of Means
Mass Destruction

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". This article is a review of a book on conventional operations published by the Military Academy i/n M. V. Frunze. The reviewers find the work generally useful, but note shortcomings in treating the employment of rocket troops, control, and various other aspects of the organization and conduct of an offensive or meeting engagement under these circumstances. It is recommended that a revised edition of the book emphasize the special characteristics of conventional operations and the going over to the employment of nuclear weapons. This article appeared in Issue No. 3 (79) for 1966.

2. Because the source of this report is extremely sensitive, this document should be handled on a strict need-to-know basis within recipient agencies. For ease of reference, reports from this publication have been assigned

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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR

DATE OF INFO. Late 1966

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DATE 27 April 1977

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Combat Actions of Troops
Without the Employment of Means of Mass Destruction

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 3 (79) for 1966 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The authors of this article are Colonel M. Skoptsov and Colonel M. Vasilenkov. This article is a review of a book on conventional operations published by the Military Academy i/n M. V. Frunze. The reviewers find the work generally useful, but note shortcomings in treating the employment of rocket troops, control, and various other aspects of the organization and conduct of an offensive or meeting engagement under these circumstances. It is recommended that a revised edition of the book emphasize the special characteristics of conventional operations and the going over to the employment of nuclear weapons.

End of Summary.

[REDACTED] Comment:

The authors also contributed "Military Science Work in the Armed Forces at a New Stage" to Issue No. 1 (77) for 1966

[REDACTED] A Colonel M. I. Skoptsov was identified as participating in a conference held by the Military Science Directorate of the General Staff in July 1967. [REDACTED]

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Combat Actions of Troops Without the Employment
of Means of Mass Destruction

by
Colonel M. Skoptsov
and
Colonel M. Vasilenkov

The rapid development of means of armed combat and the improvement of the organizational structure of troops and the methods of their combat actions inevitably raise many new and complex problems that need to be solved. It is therefore quite natural that with the introduction of nuclear weapons into service, the chief attention both here and in the armies of the major capitalist countries should be devoted to developing methods of conducting combat actions employing means of mass destruction.

At the same time there is still a need for thorough and comprehensive study of the methods of preparing and conducting combat actions using only conventional means. It is to this question that the work under review*, written by a group of instructors of the Military Academy i/n M. V. Frunze, is devoted, in which the following questions are examined: fundamentals of combat actions (Chapter 1), the offensive (Chapter 2), the meeting engagement and meeting battle (Chapter 3), the defense (Chapter 4), and rear services support of troops (Chapter 5). The authors analyze in detail the conditions under which military actions without the employment of means of mass destruction might arise, and show the special features of combat actions and the role of branches of the armed forces and branch arms in an offensive (or defensive) operation (or battle) and in a meeting engagement.

*Combat Actions of Troops Without the Employment of Means of Mass
Destruction. Publication of the Military Academy i/n M. V.
Frunze, 1966, 160 pages.

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The book in question represents, in effect, the first serious attempt to make theoretical generalizations and practical recommendations on certain matters of organizing and conducting combat actions of troops without the employment of means of mass destruction, but under conditions of constant threat of nuclear attack on the part of the enemy.

The basic matters of conducting combat actions and utilizing the branch arms are set forth in the work consecutively and are quite convincing. The most important propositions and practical recommendations on the conduct of an offensive operation (meeting engagement), and especially of defensive actions, are corroborated by calculations and stem from an analysis of the combat capabilities of the conventional means of armed combat with which the troops are equipped or which they will have in the future.

In their discussion of the actions of combined-arms units and branch arms, the authors provide useful advice on the use of tanks, artillery, aviation, and special branch arms in the main types of battle, under conditions where only conventional means of destruction are employed.

A valuable feature of the work is that many of the propositions are corroborated by examples from the experience of the Great Patriotic War. But the experience is utilized only in those cases where it remains applicable to present conditions.

We must point out still another virtue of the book -- the abundance of all kinds of tables and well-made diagrams. The data presented in them make it possible to substantiate the capabilities of troops to destroy the enemy under the conditions being discussed.

While giving the work a generally favorable appraisal, we cannot fail to dwell upon certain serious shortcomings which diminish its quality considerably.

One serious shortcoming of the work is the fact that it gives very few recommendations on the ways and methods of going over from combat actions employing conventional means of destruction to combat actions employing nuclear weapons. The mastery of these methods is one of the most important tasks

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confronting our troops.

The first chapter is not sufficiently clear in explaining the tasks of rocket troops and their combat employment of nuclear weapons. The allocation of rocket troops to take part in a massed strike against the most important targets of an opposing enemy grouping in the very first minutes of war, as recommended by the authors (p. 6), is hardly desirable, since during this period they must be in an increased state of readiness for the delivery of nuclear strikes. This proposition is confirmed by the fact that prior to the onset of military actions it is extremely difficult to ascertain the type of warfare the enemy is preparing -- nuclear or non-nuclear. Furthermore, calculations show that to destroy even such enemy targets as unprotected personnel requires an extraordinarily large expenditure of missiles with conventional warheads, especially at a range of over 35 kilometers. For example, to neutralize a motorized infantry battalion situated in a concentration area (with a launch range of up to 30 kilometers), 12 to 25 tactical missiles would be required, while for ranges of 60 kilometers -- 30 operational-tactical missiles would be needed. Judging by this data, the effectiveness of the employment of missiles with conventional warheads to deliver strikes against targets in the tactical and operational depth would be very insignificant.

We cannot agree with proposals to set up observation posts during an offensive not only at the tactical level but also at the operational level, and to bring them close to the forward edge similar to the way it was done during the Great Patriotic War (p. 38). The fallacy of this proposal is quite obvious, especially in view of the fact that under the conditions being discussed a breakthrough of a defense by an army will be carried out in several sectors, with frontages incomparably larger than in the last war. The army commander, therefore, will naturally be unable to personally follow the actions of the troops carrying out the breakthrough.

In our opinion observation posts should be set up in subunits and units, thus providing them with reliable and stable means of communications. This will make it possible to inform the army commander about the situation in a timely manner and enable him to make the appropriate decision.

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It should be emphasized that in this chapter, and in the book as a whole, very little space is given to questions of control (pp. 37-41). This section is quite weak compared to others in the book. It discusses generally-known matters of organizing and implementing control which are applied under any situational conditions. The special features of troop control in an offensive, meeting engagement (battle), or defense conducted without the employment of nuclear weapons, are not shown.

The authors' recommendations for planning an operation are unconvincing and lack the necessary substantiation. They state, "The work of the formation (large unit) commander and staff in planning an operation (or battle) will also undergo changes. Two variants of troop actions will have to be worked out in detail: one -- without the employment of means of mass destruction, the other -- with their employment (p. 38)." The proposal is formulated as affirmation, as a thesis, without giving any details. This question requires further working out and practical testing in exercises.

The main questions of the second chapter are explored more fully than those in the other chapters. But here, too, certain recommendations are made without sufficient substantiation. We have doubts, for example, about the reliability of the basic data which the researchers used in writing this chapter. In analyzing the methods of organizing and conducting an offensive, the authors worked chiefly on the assumption that the enemy would establish in advance a covering zone 10 to 15 kilometers in depth and a zone of defense, including one forward and several intermediate lines defended by his main forces (pp. 42-43). To be sure, the organization and execution of a breakthrough (negotiation) of such a defense without the employment of nuclear weapons is quite a complex matter. But it must be remembered that under present conditions this kind of defense will not always be set up by the enemy, and therefore cannot be considered typical. Most often our troops will have to contend with a defense by an enemy who goes over to it during combat actions, for example, after an unsuccessful meeting engagement. It would therefore have been desirable to discuss the actions of attacking troops under such conditions.

When treating the organization and conduct of an offensive the authors not only offer no recommendations on the matters of

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employing airborne landing forces in a battle and in an operation, but they do not even mention the possibilities for employing them under the conditions being discussed. Airborne landing forces will have broad application in any future war. They will be used primarily to ensure high rates of advance and the seizure of important targets in the enemy rear (launching sites, control posts, airfields, communications centers, bridges, crossings, etc.), as well as to accomplish independent tasks. In view of this fact the book should have dealt with the matters of using landing forces in an operation and shown how and when to drop (land) them, and how to wage combat against enemy landing forces.

Certain questions of the organization and conduct of a meeting engagement and battle (Chapter 3) are not given proper coverage. The proposals offered by the authors on these matters are put in the form of instructions.

The main drawback of this section, in our view, is that it does not, in effect, deal with the specific features of conducting a meeting engagement (battle) employing only conventional means of armed combat. The methods offered for achieving success in a meeting engagement (battle) are more applicable to nuclear conditions, since the preparation and inflicting of severe damage on an enemy grouping with fire by conventional means of combat alone are not given the major role in the book.

In exploring methods of destroying the enemy in a meeting engagement, the authors offer very few recommendations on these matters. But we know that to seize the initiative in a meeting engagement (battle), and to split up an enemy grouping and rout it, an army must establish overwhelming superiority in forces and means on the axis of the main attack. Unfortunately, no recommendations on this matter are offered in the book.

Table 7 (p. 110), which the authors refer to, does not give a complete picture of the possible balance of forces and means in the zone of an army and the degree of their massing. Moreover, the data presented in the table do not reflect the qualitative status of the troops of the two sides. One gets the impression that the densities of forces and means on the axis of the main attack were taken arbitrarily (no data are given on the width of

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the front on which the meeting engagement has developed, or the strength of the grouping delivering the main attack, etc.). Nor are any conclusions drawn from the table.

Some of the conclusions and recommendations offered by the authors need to be further refined and substantiated. For example, the assertion that the main enemy forces may be decisively routed in a meeting engagement by quickly splitting his main grouping and isolating it from reserves approaching from the depth, requires no further explanation. This thesis is absolutely correct. But how to accomplish this in practice is not discussed in the book. Furthermore, Table 7 (p. 110) shows that the overall balance of forces in an army zone may be 1.1 to 1 for tanks, 1 to 1.1 for artillery and mortars, 1.7 to 1 for motorized infantry (motorized rifle) battalions (but actually this ratio is also 1 to 1, since an enemy motorized infantry battalion is 1.6 times more powerful than one of our battalions in terms of size and combat capabilities). Given this balance of forces and means (practically equal) a combined-arms army will hardly be able to quickly split and destroy an enemy grouping. Under certain conditions this of course is feasible but it is these conditions and methods that should have been discussed in the book.

In addition to the above-mentioned shortcomings, the book in our view does not deal adequately with the role of the army commander and his influence on the course and outcome of the meeting engagement. The commander's work methods in working out a decision and transmitting tasks to the troops are not covered in sufficient detail, nor are desirable variants of the operational disposition of an army and of the actions of troops using only conventional means of destruction indicated.

We should like to draw attention to the vagueness of certain formulations. On page 111 it is stated that in making his decision the army commander determines the concept of the actions and the tasks of troops in routing the enemy, both with the employment of conventional means and with nuclear and chemical weapons. This is correct. And later it is stated, "He designates the targets to be destroyed by nuclear and chemical weapons, the tasks of rocket troops and aviation in employing these weapons... and in reconnaissance and final reconnaissance of those targets which are subject to destruction by nuclear and

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chemical warheads.

In our opinion, under the conditions being discussed the decision must be based on the employment first of all of conventional means of destruction, and the methods of action by large units in a meeting engagement must be planned. And it is always necessary in turn (and this is correctly pointed out in the book) to plan for the possibility of going over to combat operations employing nuclear weapons, and therefore to designate in advance the targets to be destroyed with nuclear weapons and keep rocket troops in readiness to deliver nuclear strikes. But here the specific features of the use of conventional means of destruction and their combat employment in a meeting engagement (battle) should have been discussed.

The authors should have provided more convincing substantiation of the width of the defensive zone of a division, and the amount of work and time required for engineer preparation of the terrain (pp. 127-130). The fourth chapter would have looked better if the authors had devoted more space to discussing the methods of troop actions when going over to the defense as the result of the unsuccessful outcome of a meeting engagement or during an offensive to repulse a powerful enemy counterattack. In advancing this proposition we are proceeding on the assumption that the fire capabilities of the troops going over to the defense in such a situation -- especially capabilities in combat against enemy tanks -- will be considerably less than when repulsing his offensive from positions prepared from the engineer standpoint. In connection with this it would have been a good idea to cite the appropriate calculations of the capabilities of our divisions for combat against enemy tanks.

Some refinement also is called for with regard to the time the counterattack is to be delivered. The authors offer only one variant and recommend that the counterattack be delivered during combat for the defensive zones of first-echelon large units under conditions where the attacking enemy has sustained considerable damage: his battle formations have been disorganized and a further offensive on the axis of the planned counterattack has been halted (p. 143). These unquestionably are the most favorable conditions for a successful counterattack. But a discussion of other variants typical of these conditions would have been very useful for practice.

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The quality of the fourth chapter is somewhat diminished by the fact that it does not present a thorough analysis of the nature and methods of actions by troops of the probable enemy when conducting an offensive without employing nuclear weapons. A special section should have been devoted to this matter.

In organizing and conducting combat actions in a non-nuclear war, rear services support of troops will have essential specific features. These are partially discussed in Chapter 5. In our view it would have been useful to make a comparison of materiel expended when nuclear weapons are and are not employed, show the possible expenditure of fuel, ammunition, and other materiel and the amount required to carry out an army offensive (defensive) operation, and examine the complexity of rear services support, especially in a meeting engagement where there is aggressive enemy action against rear installations and transportation lines, and great mobility of troops.

In conclusion we must point out certain inaccuracies in the book. In defining the content and depth of a division's subsequent task and task of the day (p. 52), it is stated that the subsequent task of the division will usually be to complete the rout of the defense to the entire depth of the disposition of the battle formation of an enemy division, while the task of the day will be to develop the offensive and seize a line (area) at a depth of up to 25 to 30 kilometers. But according to the views of the probable enemy and the statements of the authors themselves, the total depth of the disposition of the battle formation of his division reaches 30 kilometers (p. 40).

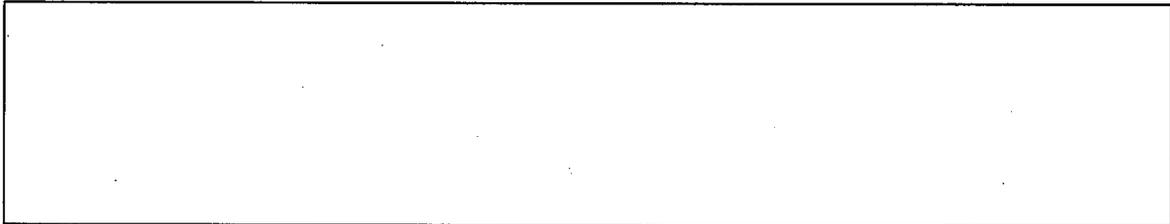
Should the book be revised, it would be desirable in the new edition to substantiate the combat tasks of the division, not only when breaking through the forward line, but also during an offensive against an enemy who has had time to set up a covering zone, and also when going over to the defense following an unsuccessful meeting engagement. It seems to us desirable to eliminate general propositions and show the special features of organizing and conducting combat actions without the employment of nuclear weapons and the methods of going over to the employment of means of mass destruction.

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On the whole the book deserves a favorable appraisal and its publication will unquestionably be of considerable help to troops and staffs in operational and combat training.



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